

WARRENTON CLAY COMPANY by Marcella Lindsey

Marcella Lindsey  
P.O. Box 191-160 S.W. Alder  
Warrenton, Oregon 97146  
(503) 861-2296

Warrenton Clay Company incorporated in 1916 in Warrenton, Clatsop County, Oregon. The Company had a capital stock of \$125,000.00 consisting of 1250 shares of common stock selling for \$100.00 per share.

The officers and directors of the company were elected by the stockholders, required by Oregon law. Those officers elected were, President: George W. Warren, Vice-President: George Chew, Secretary-Treasurer: E.P. Smiley and General Manager: Warren Overpack who had been in manufacturing and marketing clay products in Indiana and Lehigh, Iowa from 1884 until January 1915 when he resigned and sold his interest. The Directors of the Clay Company were all of the above officers with the addition of G. Clifford Barlow who owned and operated BARLOW GENERAL MERCHANDISE with the Post Office in the store built on the North side of the tracks in 1890.

On January 7, 1916, Mrs. Sarah Warren donated fifteen acres along the Skipanon River to Manager, Warren Overpack for the building of the clay plant. It was to be a modern plant and would be the property of the company.

The land that was donated from the Warren Estate had originally been the donation land claim of David & Hannah Pease and was purchased by Daniel K. Warren from them in 1870 when the Peases who had built a log cabin there decided to sell the land and move back to what is now 13th and Anchor Street where the ground was higher and they operated their hotel and livery stable there until 1879 when they sold the property to C.A. McGuire.

Daniel K. Warren had also bought acreage from the donation land claims of Jeremiah G. Tuller and F.W. Wallace, a total of 160 acres. They had Chinese laborers build 2 1/2 miles of dikes, reclaiming land along the edge of the Skipanon River. Maps from 1890 show that the present northern part of the peninsula did not then exist. This land was built up from dredged fill about fifty years later. D. K. Warren died in 1903.

The location of Warrenton Clay Company plant extended from where Port Warren Homeowners Condominiums are to where Cavenham Forest Industries Lumber Mill is situated now on N.E. Skipanon Drive.

The Company purchased 79 acres of quality clay lands situated on the Lewis & Clark River at old Fort Clatsop. This made it easy to transport the clay up the Lewis & Clark River to the Warrenton location. The clay had been tested and proved to be first-class ware and would be sufficient to supply the plant for at least thirty years with a profit of at least 20% and would increase in value.

In the late 1800's, Warrenton was prophesied to become one of the most important Cities and Sea Ports of the World because of being located at the mouth of the Columbia River on the Pacific Ocean, almost identical as New York is situated at the mouth of the Hudson River on the Atlantic Ocean. The Columbia River is constantly being supplied from the great Columbia Lake just south of Fairmont Hot Springs and about fifty miles north of Kimberley, B.C. where I was raised before comming to Warrenton in 1941. Warrenton received indorsement for being the natural Seaport of the Pacific from eight people in important positions. Some of them were, Congressman, 1850, Thos. H. Benton, Former President Union Pacific: S.H.H. Clark, Late President Union Pacific: E.H. Harriman, Late President Southern Pacific: Collis P. Huntington, Former President Northern Pacific: C.S. Mellen, Asst. Chief Engineer N.Y. Central: A.A. Schenck, President Great Northern: Louis W. Hill and The Empire Builder: James J. Hill.

Besides being located at the mouth of the Columbia River it also had good rail facilities with shipping being done from the Hill Terminals docks at Flavel which were 2000 to 3000 feet in length.

and was adequate not only to care for the freight and passengers carried by the steamers that run from Flavel to Frisco in 1915, but also the trans-Pacific freight for the Eastern markets by way of Panama Canal.

In May 1912, Port of Astoria proposed additional shipping facility Smiths Point with Municipal Docks, comprising two 1000 feet piers with a 300 foot slip of 30 foot depth, equipped with most modern electric machinery for handling freight, as well as coal & oil to supply ships.

The local market in Astoria, Warrenton and Flavel in 1916, was a combined population of 15,000 persons and growing rapidly would take a considerable amount of materials for paving, sewer construction, water works, docks, building and harbor development. The company also expected to supply wares to all coastal cities on the west coast that were connected with Warrenton by water transportation.

When Warrenton Clay Company plant was finally completed in 1916 it consisted of : Main drier 240 ft. long, 80 ft. wide, and four stories high, the fourth story being a half story. Built in addition to this was a machinery building 40 ft. wide, 50 ft. long, and four stories high, boiler room, clay shed and outbuildings.

The twelve kilns when completed ,were 33 ft. in diameter and constructed for efficiency and output of burned ware, and at the lowest cost per ton of burned ware. The company saved a lot of money by constructing the plant and kilns themselves and making their own brick and fire brick.

Fuel and power very important and they received satisfactory rates on electric power. One steam boiler was installed for the heating, live steam being used for power purposes and the exhaust steam for heating. California fuel oil was used because of low cost and efficiency in burning, and the saving in handling of coal & wood, The oil fuel could raise heat quickly and the kilns turned faster.

The plant when completed operated ten hours a day and gave employment to from 75 to 100 people and manufactured from 80 to 100 tons of products a day. The output could be doubled by work force and working night and day if business increased.

The Warrenton Clay Co. manufactured salt-glazed conduits, sewer pipe, hollow block, flue lining, roofing tile, drain tile, fire brick, common brick, well coping, paving brick and in 1917 manufacture of dishes, pottery, vases, bowls etc.

Two of the ladies that worked at the clay plant are still living in Warrenton. Marion (Warren) Shultz who was born in Warrenton on May 20, 1900 worked on the main floor, testing ware by tapping to see if they had the proper ring to them before sending them on for approval. Gladys (Shoop) Falconer born Feb. 27, 1903 worked in the basement level testing dishes & vases for cracks or weaknesses, then dipping them in fluid and wiping them off.

The company closed operations in a little over a year and in 1919 the Dailey Clay Products Co. organized and began commercial operations using the Warrenton Clay Products building. This venture also failed in about a year and the City of Warrenton came into ownership of the kilns, buildings and land. The old brick dry kilns were purchased by Prouty Lumber & Box Company from the City and tore them down in October 1929. The Prouty Co. also put out bids for tearing down the brick building, the Columbia River Fishermen's Cooperative won. The brick was to be used to build a cold storage plant at the north side of what used to be San Juan Packing Co. later to be New England Fish Co.

I would like to hear from anyone who used to work at the Clay Plant. Marcella Lindsey, P. O. Box 191, Warrenton, Oregon 97146